

July 17, 2001

REIMPORTATION OF FDA-APPROVED PHARMACEUTICALS -- HON. RON PAUL
(Extensions of Remarks - July 17, 2001)

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HON. RON PAUL OF TEXAS IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES Tuesday, July 17, 2001

- Mr. PAUL. Mr. Speaker, due to a personal matter I was unable to be present for roll-call votes last week. I particularly regret not being in attendance for the votes on the amendments to the Agriculture Appropriations bills offered by the gentleman from Vermont (Roll Call no. 216) and the gentleman from Minnesota (Roll Call no. 217) dealing with the reimportation of FDA-approved pharmaceuticals. I would have enthusiastically supported both amendments had I been able to be here last week and I was quite disappointed to see the gentleman from Vermont's amendment rejected and pleased to see the gentleman from Minnesota's amendment accepted by this body.

- I appreciate the opportunity to explain why I supported these amendments. As my colleagues are aware, many Americans are concerned about the high cost of prescription drugs. These high prices particularly affect low-income senior citizens because many seniors have a greater than average need for prescription drugs and lower than average income. One of the reasons prescription drug prices are high is government policies which give a few

powerful companies a monopoly position in the prescription drug market, such as those restricting the importation of quality pharmaceuticals. Therefore, all members of Congress who are serious about lowering prescription drug prices should have supported these amendments.

- As a representative of an area near the Texas-Mexican border I often hear from angry constituents who cannot purchase inexpensive quality imported pharmaceuticals in their local drug store. Some of these constituents regularly travel to Mexico on their own to purchase pharmaceuticals.

- Opponents of the amendments offered by the gentlemen from Vermont and Minnesota waged a hysterical campaign to convince members that this amendment will result in consumers purchasing unsafe products. Acceptance of this argument requires one to assume that consumers will buy cheap pharmaceuticals without taking any efforts to ensure that they are buying a quality product. However, the experience of my constituents who are currently traveling to Mexico to purchase prescription drugs shows that consumers are quite capable of ensuring they purchase safe products without interference from Big ``Mother."

- Furthermore, if the supporters of the status quo were truly concerned about promoting health, instead of protecting the special privileges of powerful companies, they would be more concerned with reforming the current policies which endanger health by artificially raising the cost of prescription drugs. Oftentimes lower income Americans will take less of a prescription medicine than necessary to save money. Some senior citizens even forgo other necessities, including food, in order to afford their medications. By reducing the prices of pharmaceuticals this amendment will help ensure no child has to take less than the recommended dosage of a prescription medicine and no senior has to choose between medication and food.

- In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, I once again wish to express my regret for missing the votes on the amendments by the gentlemen from Vermont and Minnesota and urge my colleagues to show they are serious about lowering the prices of prescription drugs and that they trust the people to do what is in their best interest, by supporting future efforts to establish a true free market in pharmaceuticals.